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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 000700

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [1](#). Muhammad Cartoon Controversy

Key stories in the media:

Major media reported that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz is expected to present to Acting PM Ehud Olmert today recommendations formulated by the defense establishment to reduce Israel's ties with the PA as of Sunday, the day after the Hamas-led Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) takes office. According to the proposal, Israel would announce a freeze on further transfers of the tax revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the PA; a ban on the entry of workers from the Gaza Strip into Israel; a ban on the movement of Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank; the freezing of a plan to upgrade the crossing points between the territories and Israel; freezing plans to build a port and airport in Gaza; and the prevention of transfers of military equipment to the PA from foreign countries, such as donations of armored personnel carriers and communications gear. In contrast, Palestinian merchants would continue to be allowed into Israel, and the Erez and Karni crossings between Israel and Gaza would remain open. However, the defense establishment would begin preparations for turning these crossings into full-fledged borders, and removing Gaza from its joint customs envelope with Israel. The Jerusalem Post quoted Foreign Ministry sources as saying that Israel is considering labeling the PA an enemy of the state on the level of Syria, Lebanon, and Libya. Yediot bannered: "Hamas Era Begins." The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel's decision to halt funding to a Hamas-led PA has put NGOs under a harsh GOI spotlight.

Maariv reported that Israel intends to present a "tangible" ultimatum to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas: if he does not prevent Hamas from forming a government, Israel would detach Gaza from the West Bank, thus causing tremendous harm to the Palestinian economy. Maariv reported that some Arab governments intend to stop economic aid to the PA.

Yediot reported that Israel is concerned about possible erosion in international opposition to Hamas. The media reported that a Hamas delegation led by Khaled Mashal, the head of the movement's political bureau, met with Turkish government officials in Ankara on Thursday. Yediot reported that Israeli diplomatic sources likened Turkey's move to a stab in Israel's back, and quoted them as saying that this is a crisis in confidence with Washington and Europe and not only with Israel. Israel Radio reported that following U.S. and Israeli pressure, the members of the delegation did not meet with Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Ha'aretz quoted Turkish FM Abdullah Gul as saying Thursday that he had clarified to Hamas that Turkey stood firmly behind the Quartet's condition to withhold aid from a Hamas-led Palestinian government unless the Islamist group renounces violence and abandons its commitment to Israel's destruction. Major media

reported that Jordan has invited Hamas representatives to visit. Maariv reported that Jordanian FM Maruf al-Bakhit has decided to refrain from receiving the Hamas delegation.

Citing the Russian news agency Interfax, Ha'aretz and Israel Radio quoted the chief of the Russian army's chief of general staff Yuri Baluyevsky as saying that Russia may supply 50 armored personnel carriers and two helicopters to the Hamas-led PA. Israel Radio later quoted Russian FM Sergey Lavrov as saying that any such deals with the PA would be coordinated with Israel. The radio reported that Hamas has asked Russia to pressure Israel to put an end to targeted killings. Israel Radio reported that on Thursday, FM Tzipi Livni told visiting EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana that visits of Hamas officials abroad are harmful.

Maariv (Ben Caspit) reported that over the past two weeks, Hamas has been devising a plan that would allow it to rule in the PA and to break the wall of international isolation that has been created around the movement. The plan reportedly includes a formal continuation of the truce, indirect recognition of Israel, and the inclusion of Hamas's military branch in the Palestinian police. Yediot (Alex Fishman) reported that Hamas will more or less exercise self-restraint in response to any Israeli provocation plans and then establish its power during a year. The Jerusalem Post reported that at closed meetings in Beirut and Damascus, Hamas has been developing a new charter that is designed to showcase a more moderate face. The newspaper wrote that its source is one of those advising on its content -- Dr. Azzam Tamimi, the Hebron-born director of the Institute of Political Thought in London, who acknowledged that this new document would still call for an end to the Jewish state and the creation of a Palestinian state on all on British-Mandate Palestine.

Leading media reported that Hamas on Thursday nominated Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader widely viewed by Palestinians as a pragmatist, as the next PA prime minister. The Jerusalem Post reported that a power struggle between Fatah and Hamas is looming on the eve of the PLC's inauguration.

Ha'aretz reported that a military order that took effect last week bars Palestinians with permits from entering Israel via the roads that Israelis use to enter the country from the West Bank. The order also forbids Israelis to transport Palestinians with valid entry permits via these roads. Instead, Palestinians must enter via one of the 11 crossing points earmarked for them. Until now, Israelis could ferry Palestinians with valid permits into Israel without going through one of these special crossings.

Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Jewish leaders in Washington that the U.S. does not have a credibility problem regarding the use of force against Iran. Last night, Channel 2-TV reported that three weeks ago, Iran secretly tested a solid-fuel ballistic missile with a 2,000-km range.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post cited the defense establishment as saying Thursday that construction of the separation fence in the Judean Desert will start in the coming weeks. The southern section of the fence between Israel and the West Bank will begin east of the Hebron Hills, where the barrier currently ends.

The Jerusalem Post reported that senior Israeli security and government officials warned on Thursday that Israel needs to prepare for a large-scale disaster caused by Qassam rockets that could strike the Ashkelon power plant or chemical storage tanks in the nearby industrial zone.

Leading media reported that Israel Aircraft Industries and Boeing are jointly developing an interception system against Qassam rockets.

Maariv featured Mufid Abdul Kader (phon.), Khaled Mashal's half-brother, who was an engineer for the City of Dallas and is currently being tried for making death threats against Mark Briskman, director of the Anti-Defamation League in Dallas.

Ha'aretz reported that three peace activists, members of the organization European Jews For Just Peace, were prevented from entering Israel on Thursday.

Ha'aretz (English Ed.) cited research by Prof. Chaim Waxman, an American Jewish sociologist, that between 10 to 30 percent of Americans who immigrated to Israel in the past decade continue to commute to the U.S. for

work.

Commenting on criticism voiced in Israel about his movie "Munich", American filmmaker Steven Spielberg was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that Israelis are entitled to be afraid of terror but that he is entitled to ask tough questions.

Major media reported that on Thursday, Justice Minister Tzipi Livni signed an extradition order for underworld kingpin Zeev Rosenstein. He will be flown to the U.S. in about two weeks, escorted by U.S. marshals.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It already is clear that under the current situation, there will be no talk about operating the passage between Gaza and the West Bank as had been promised to Condoleezza Rice." Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote in Ha'aretz: "[Putin's Russia] primary reason ... is its desire to return the world to the bipolar era and minimize the American hegemony that evolved after the collapse of the Soviet Union."

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Unfortunately, as we have seen, pretend recognition can only produce pretend peace."

Block Quotes:

1I. "What the Palestinians Have to Lose"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (February 17): "It already is clear that under the current situation, there will be no talk about operating the passage between Gaza and the West Bank as had been promised to Condoleezza Rice. The Palestinians are not ready to invest anything to ease the passage of workers and merchandise. Their excuses are varied and strange. They expect that Israel, the Americans and the international community will make things easier for their people and goods. That did not prevent them from shooting at the vehicle passage at the Erez crossing. And the launch of Qassam rockets from nearby areas continues as usual. In addition, they are boycotting the new passage that Israel opened at Kerem Shalom.... The Quartet's representative, James Wolfensohn, is behaving as if nothing happened. After the rise of Hamas, he pushed for an operation to collect funds for the Palestinian Authority. He presents Israel with ridiculous proposals for removing most of the security measures at the passages as if they were between Canada and the U.S., demanding the transfer of goods with nearly no security check."

II. "Putin's Real Target? The U.S."

Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote in Ha'aretz (February 17): "There should be no mistake here: Putin's invitation last week to Hamas representatives to visit Moscow this month, was not capricious. Russian policy does not rely on gut feelings.... It is part of the comprehensive policy that has characterized [Russian President Vladimir Putin] since he was elected in 2000. Its objective: to return to Russia the international standing the Soviet Union once had. From the days of Peter the Great and through the Soviet period, Russia has seen the Middle East as a region of influence, a type of backyard in which to advance its crucial interests.... Putin's Russia is also trying to build special ties with China so as to create new rules in the international system. Its primary reason for doing so is its desire to return the world to the bipolar era and minimize the American hegemony that evolved after the collapse of the Soviet Union.... American foreign policy is aimed at accomplishing results.... The Russians, on the other hand, are still too weak to conduct a similar foreign policy. The policy led by Putin therefore suffices with activity, with defiance, and with sending a message: we're here, we're an important factor, we're liable to disrupt things, and therefore it's necessary and worthwhile to take us into account.... It seems that in the final analysis, even the West will hitch a ride on the Russian approach to Hamas and will fall

into line with Putin."

III. "Playing Pretend"

Editorial Page Editor Saul Singer wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (February 17): "The whole world -- even Russia and Egypt -- is ostensibly demanding that Hamas recognize Israel's right to exist. Yet what is really being demanded is that Hamas pretend to accept Israel, like the PLO in 1988. Unfortunately, as we have seen, pretend recognition can only produce pretend peace.... IN practice, no one ever asked the Palestinians to transform themselves, as Israelis have. The idea that Palestinians would accept that the Jews have created a state here by right, and are not just thieves sitting on 'stolen Palestinian land,' is never really contemplated, let alone considered realistic.... The real objection to Israel is Islamic, not nationalist.... Western leaders should say that the root cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict, like the root cause of the Islamist war against the West, is the rejection of any right of non-Muslims to hold power.... Compelling Hamas to pretend that it accepts Israel may be a necessary first step. More necessary is to realize that while those who reject 'Christian' sovereignty over America and Europe are considered wild-eyed extremists, the analogous view of Israel remains mainstream throughout the Arab world among 'nationalists' and Islamists alike."

12. Muhammad Cartoon Controversy:

Summary:

Columnist Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, who served as (Meretz) education minister, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The writer of these lines will ... no longer listen to European moral preaching against Israel."

Block Quotes:

"Stop the Moral Preaching"

Columnist Prof. Amnon Rubinstein, who served as (Meretz) education minister, wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (February 17): "This is an amazing story: an atmosphere of open hatred to Islam is prevailing in Europe's democratic and liberal states.... [However, as opposed to anti-Semitism] Islamophobia is mainly directed at Islam's religion and culture and not at Muslims.... The interesting point is that this atmosphere was created in absence of the harsh conditions Israel is going through.... How can one explain the difference between the harsh European response and Israeli moderation?.... I believe there are two explanations for that difference: the first one resides in the fact that Israel's political, social, and legal leadership learned to live with a continued emergency situation and adopted more tolerant positions than those of European states that have been astonished to suddenly discover Islamic extremism in their midst.... The second explanation is that Israeli society is more pluralistic and multi-cultural than European societies.... This is why the writer of these lines will ... no longer listen to European moral preaching against Israel."

JONES